

Argentina's

New World Nazis

by

Ray Josephs

Does history repeat itself—and is the history of nazi Germany now being repeated in Argentina? Not precisely, this observer finds. There is always a difference. But while our Good Neighbor policy was weak-kneed, Germany has for years busily cultivated the seeds of totalitarianism on New World soil. Economic sanctions applied in time still might crush nazi elements and bring democratic leadership to the fore.

TO the *portenos* of big, bustling Buenos Aires, the nightly scene down at *Dock Sud* used to be just another metropolitan incident, no more exciting than watching the Staten Island Ferry pull out or seeing the Oakland boat being made ready to cross San Francisco Bay.

Every night at ten the whistle would blow, the gangplank would be drawn up and the old-fashioned multi-decked river boat would be tugged out to the muddy *Rio de la Plata* for the overnight journey to Montevideo. And a trip to "Monte" had about the same importance to Argentines as the Staten Island ride or the Golden Gate excursions to Manhattanites or San Franciscans.

The Montevideo boats still run but the journey isn't the same any more. The lights of the *Costanera* strung out along the long stone river embankment as you leave Buenos Aires and the traditional *toastados y cafe* served on the house just before arrival time

the next morning haven't changed. But once you step onto the pier in Montevideo the contrast is sharp, dramatic, a little breath taking.

You buy a newspaper and you read news. *La Manana* likes the government; *El Pais* objects, but it's all there and a lot more besides. You step into a telephone booth, dial a number. You talk and hang up, conscious for the first time in months that no outsider has been wire tapping. Your bags are inspected by the *Aduana* authorities. But no books are seized as seditious, no letters scrutinized as dangerous, no questions asked about family, friends or religion.

There is free air in tiny, democratic Uruguay. And more and more Argentines—those who can, of course—are taking the night boat to come over and breathe it. Montevideo has become a kind of refuge in a Latin America which under Berlin and Madrid-inspired Argentine influence seems headed more and more down the totalitarian road.

It is typical of the Uruguayans that unlike many of their Good Neighbors, the more their freedom is threatened, the more they fight to assert it and to protect and cherish it. I spent some time in Montevideo recently after the atmosphere for newspaper correspondents who wanted to file news, not official Argentine handouts, became unduly oppressive. It was like another world, like suddenly leaving an occupied camp for freedom. And it stands out all the more as I think back over events of the last months and recall my journey through Chile, Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Central America and Mexico en route back to the U. S. A. for the first time in almost five years.

Almost every country in the Americas has already been affected by what has happened in Argentina. But it is only a beginning. Latin America today is seething with dis-

content, with growing nationalist prides, with fears about the postwar and what the U. S. is going to do about it and with a curious mixture of emotions about what is going on in Argentina.

You sense it when you fly across the Andes to Santiago, Chile. You see the Argentine pattern already at work in land-locked, mountain-top Bolivia; military control of everything civilian, strait-jacket censorship, intolerance, anti-Semitism, Nazi and Falangist-bred patriotism which expresses itself in hatred of *Tio Sam*, meaning the United States, Peru, full of lip service to democracy is run like a feudal *hacienda* with no opposition tolerated. I was in Ecuador when the popular but uncertain Velasco Ibarra took over and in Colombia just before a group of Argentine-minded Army officers unsuccessfully attempted to install a military dictatorship in Bogota. The only reasonably quiet republic I found in Central America was Costa Rica. For I was able in a short space of weeks to eye-witness movements in Nicaragua, in Honduras, in Salvador and in Guatemala. In some dictators are going out, in others they are coming in, but everywhere there were signs of disquiet that make the visions of peace in the Americas almost less secure than anywhere else on the battle-torn globe.

Warning of Future

THERE is a mistaken notion here in the States that all of these moves are dictated down to the last detail in Buenos Aires and that everything which happens in Buenos Aires is in turn handled via direct line to the *Wilhelmstrasse*. This is accompanied by an assumption that if and when Hitler is beaten, all the troubles will stop. The fact is that while much of what has been taking place in Latin America today and will be happening *mañana* stems from the inspiration and covert help of Germany via the Colonels clique, there is a deeper reason. How it came to happen in Buenos Aires gives the clue as to the ways and means in which the rest of Latin America is involved. It also gives a dangerous warning of what lies ahead here, regardless of developments outside the Americas.

Many people have asked me if it is not

true that the events of the last eighteen months in Latin America do not somehow indicate the failure of our Good Neighbor policy. There is some truth in this point, but it is certainly not correct to blame everything on such a facile premise. It is not the Good Neighbor idea which is as much to blame as the fact that such a policy should have been devised and put into effect a long time ago and that it must needs be extended, broadened and made more sincere today.

The Germans in their operations in Argentina and in Latin America worked their technique the other way around. Their method was to go after not merely the people who had the power—which is essentially the way our own State Department has operated—but to win those who might eventually wish to seize the reins for their own advantage. In Argentina, for example, the Nazis and the German militarists before them started working a long time ago. Authenticated information, compiled by careful researchers, traces German plans back a hundred years or more. But the present day effort roughly began before the first World War, kept Argentina neutral then, emerged again when the Prussian militarists and the Junkers found opportunities limited at home and began expanding their operations in Latin America.

Argentina offered the ideal field—it was the only country which had an almost pure European stock. It possessed rich agricultural and industrial possibilities. And it had an Army; an Army which was taught not only the goose-step but the political philosophy of Berlin. After the Nazis came into power, the cultivation of Argentina through General Wilhelm von Faupel's Ibero-American Institute began in earnest. The emphasis was in two directions. There was the military drive to convince the Argentines first of Nazi superiority and the value of a strong, centralized authoritarian system for the military itself. And the other to develop a strong nationalist group in Argentina which would operate against the Americans and the British. It was these forces which, in the main, brought about the June 4th coup and it is the same forces, so carefully cultivated and developed, which are now guiding the *Casa Rosada* B. A.'s pink White

House, and spreading through the rest of the Americas.

The desire for power and the hatred of the British and Americans which motivate many Army officials in Argentina and the other Latin republics means that the rapidly approaching downfall of Hitler and Tojo will have little direct effect on totalitarianism in Latin America. What the colonels have acquired from Berlin and Rome and Madrid is a system which fits in perfectly with their personal plan, a plan to which they have been bred without fully realizing its source and which they intend to continue for as long as they can hold the power.

That this imposition of a freedom-crushing, aggressive Fascist state also provides a basis for the Nazis to move into Latin America, develop a foothold in this hemisphere and get ready for their next try at world conquest is only of incidental concern to the Argentine colonels.

The Nazis have always wanted it that way and not without reason. When the war began, Argentina which had always lived from the sale of its meat and wheat to England and the Continent felt the war's sharp impact far more than did the U. S. Many of the rich, ultra-conservative cattle raising *estancia*-owners had a natural sympathy toward Britain. It was a latent sympathy however and the British fumbled, and we belatedly began attempts to develop it further. The Nazis who had been carrying on their propaganda activities a long time immediately began their Latin blitz—on the Argentine military and on the extremists among the Argentine youth. Both groups could be sold on the idea that they would have something personal to gain under the authoritarian, and something to lose under the democratic way. Artfully stimulated prejudices, nationalism and sovereignty were made the basis by which both the nationalists and white-haired, tight-lipped President Ramon S. Castillo long preserved Argentine neutrality. Neutrality as sold in Argentina, means independence of action for a proud, sensitive people. In operation it meant non-cooperation with the rest of the Americas and giving the Nazis full rein to carry on espionage, sabotage and fifth columning.



A Vocal Minority

IT was a device like Hitler's devices that won support in Argentina because its appeal was direct and practical. True, the support was that of a minority and never that of a party like the National Socialists or the Fascisti. But it was an active, vocal minority which had something personal to gain. And since majority sentiment was predominately the other way, Castillo early began the suppressions which eventually paved the way for the military to take over almost without a struggle. At the same time the vital corps of younger, ambitious Army officers were worked on. The United States was constantly pictured as arming Brazil for an attack on Argentina. Internal graft and dissension were fomented to their utmost to create public unrest—another Hitler technique. The advantages of Argentina's fence-sitting position were not hard to stress for in spite of everything Buenos Aires did to

aid the Axis, the U. S. and Britain, although issuing detailed protesting memoranda, continued to buy and sell and trade, while Argentina grew richer and more prosperous through war.

Despite what most of the world thought in those first June days of 1943 it was obvious to some of us in Buenos Aires that throwing out Castillo was no move to break the Axis. Rather it was a fear that Castillo might "submit to Allied pressure." It was the Army's destiny to take over and rule that caused the colonels to move in. Those first days were full of airy promises and balcony delivered double-talk to the crowds in tree-lined *Plaza Mayo* in Buenos Aires and to the diplomatic representatives of the embassies. As in Germany, the most presentable representatives of the colonels' clique were pushed forward to protest and promise to make us believe that soon—"just give us the recognition first, please"—steps would be taken against the Axis. Democracy fading under Castillo would be restored, to be sure, and only graft—which of course had had no public supporters—would be eliminated before the country would be handed back to the people. I recall cabling long stories to my papers—through Montevideo—expressing the hope of realistic pro-democratic Argentines that no recognition would be granted on the basis of such promises. Pro-democratic Argentines apparently had no place in the judgment of Washington and London, however.

Then it began, step by step. First, as in the Reich, it was the press, already gagged by Castillo's State of Siege. Military censors moved into editors' chairs. They determined what could get into type and what must be put on the "dead hook." They stopped or ruthlessly blue-pencilled all outgoing cables. All this, of course, under the guise of maintaining neutrality and impartiality. The radio was next and with it the films. Then came the trade unions, the pro-democratic organizations and the political parties. The colonels clique—the notorious G. O. U. — which put the program into execution first fumbled. Then getting renewed strength from the failure of the U. S. and Britain to do anything they seemed almost to be working from a Spanish edition of "Mein Kampf." General Pedro P. Ramirez who

was put in as President to wave the flag and attend the innumerable Federal affairs, rubber-stamped decrees with such rapidity that stories even circulated that no paper could be left on his desk more than a moment lest it be signed and made into an official statute.

Official intervention spread into even the tiniest details of personal life. Telephone lines were tapped, mail opened, businesses intervened or expropriated. All, as in Germany, in the interests of the State and for "the improvement of the people," who were not consulted. Even the slogans were similar to Der Fuehrer's. Everything was advertised as a drive against Communism—and that term became all inclusive for anything the jingoistic colonels didn't like. Church and State which, despite Argentina's strong Catholicism had always been kept well apart, were linked with religious instruction made compulsory. The most reactionary, Falangist-influenced churchmen served as behind-scenes mentors with the leading pro-Nazi Army officers.

The Critics Dismissed

ANYONE who dared oppose the regime was silenced. Taking an official designed-for-export announcement that freedom of speech had been restored seriously, a group of 150 of Argentina's most distinguished educators, scientists, doctors and lawyers put their names to a petition urging the colonels to reconsider their course. Every one was dismissed: And the last jam-packed lectures of some of the professors, men who had served for twenty-five years and brought world fame to Argentina, were as heart-rending as anything ever seen in the early book-burning days of the Reich. Labor leaders, teachers, civil service heads, all who could not be silenced by threats—and unfortunately too many could—were hustled off to Villa Devoto or down to concentration camps in remote Patagonia.

Argentina's break with the Axis changed none of this. When Ramirez and his Foreign Minister sought to implement the action, they were forced out. In Ramirez' place came square-jawed Edelmiro J. Farrell. The real power, however, remained in the hands of the colonels' *junta*, and especially those of Juan M. Peron whose list of



jobs began to run as big as that of Goering's medals. There have been both major and minor changes in the cabinet since and more recently, under the sting of the bitterest White Paper denunciation our State Department has ever issued, other moves such as the supposed lifting of censorship and freeing of a certain few political prisoners designed to make the world believe that things aren't so bad in Argentina. Underneath however the terrorism and the plan to spread to the rest of the Americas gets stronger, not less.

I know the Argentine colonels, know what they want and how they have gone about getting it in Argentina and the countries south of the Rio Grande. Despite their ruthless suppression of democracy in their own country, their interference in Bolivia, in Paraguay and now most emphatically in Chile, despite their open aid to the Nazis, so bitterly denounced by Washington, they have to date succeeded in getting away with it because of the tolerance and the seemingly unable-to-move position of Argentina's biggest customers, Britain and the United States. Again and again we have issued notes, have cited facts and published warnings—but have failed to follow them up. We have talked economic sanctions and even tried to apply them in some small ways. Each time, however, we have withdrawn just when we should have advanced.

While not so long ago there was much controversy over whether anything ought to be done about Argentina, today that phase of the issue is no longer in debate. Argentina's vast rearmament program, begun after we rightly refused to sell lend-lease weapons which Argentina wanted to buy for her own non-hemispheric defense purposes, is no

longer a petty growth. It is a full grown threat to Argentina's smaller, weaker neighbors and a potential time bomb certain to explode in the direction of Brazil and eventually of the U. S.

The activities of the Nazis in Argentina are not merely espionage through the open gateway of Buenos Aires. We have pretty well succeeded in neutralizing the operations carried on against us in the purely military sense. What the Nazis have filtered into Argentina via Spain and what Argentina has allowed to spread to the rest of Latin America is far more dangerous. For under the *pampa* soil the Nazis have buried the seeds of the next war.

There are those who have argued against sanctions for Argentina as interference in internal affairs. I disagree—and so do many of those pro-democratic Argentines still able to voice their opinions. The Argentine military regime came into power through outside influence. Cutting ourselves off from Argentina—refusing to buy her meat and wheat and forgetting business and refusing to sell our products to her—is not interference; it is merely refusing to subsidize Fascism as we subsidized it in Spain and elsewhere.

Once we close the gates, the pinch will come in prosperous Argentina. The rich *estancieros* today may not like the military, but they tolerate them because they can continue to sell and profit. The middle-class—and Argentina is one of the few Latin countries that has one—objects, but its leaders have been bound and gagged and it has not suffered enough physically to rise up and do something drastic. Meanwhile the colonels win more and more Argentines to their way of thinking by an all-inclusive,

Goebbels-patterned drive to make the people believe the U. S. A. is trying to crush and intimidate them, to rule them or to break them.

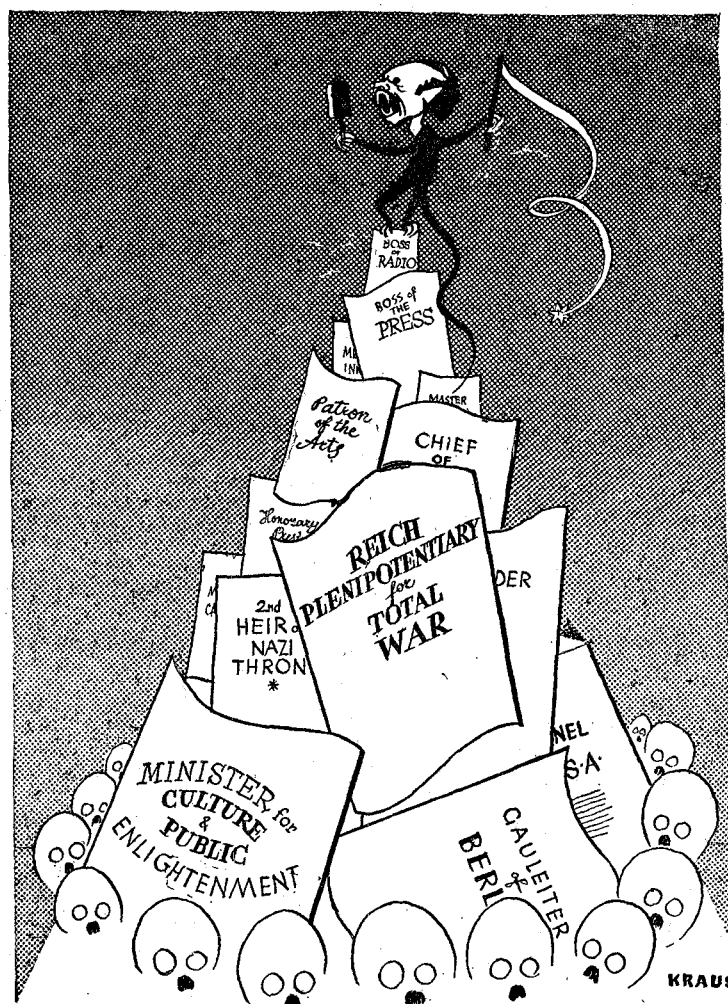
We are getting less popular day by day in Argentina. Elsewhere in Latin America the same thing is happening. Chileans and Bolivians and Ecuadorians seeing that Argentina has profited from her defiance of the U. S.—while they have suffered through cooperation—are realistically asking if they have been the suckers for *Tio Sam*. We are being blamed for imposing sanctions on Argentina anyway, even though we haven't imposed them . . . And the longer we leave the issue unsolved, the more difficult and dangerous it will be to solve tomorrow.

Recently I talked to a number of high officials in Washington, trying to find out what might be done here and in London. I found essential agreement and understanding of the danger of the issue—but an excuse and an explanation.

"If we cut ourselves off from Argentina," they said, "the Allied High Command rightly insists that some way must be found to supply England, and our own troops in England, with the meat and wheat they are now getting from Argentina. That meat must come from the American public. If the American public is sufficiently aroused and sufficiently willing to pull in its own belt, we can take a definite course, cut ourselves off from Argentina so that the Argentines themselves can do what's necessary, and not have to back down."

I have only been back in the U. S. for a short time. But what I have seen and heard and read convinces me the American people are not merely ready, but ahead of officialdom in wanting to do something to check the Fascist octopus now spreading in our own hemisphere.

It is not the first time that the American people have been more alive to such issues than their leaders.



BOOKS

The World Has Neighborhoods

U. S. WAR AIMS, by Walter Lippmann. Little, Brown. 235 pages. \$1.50

WHEN Orson Welles saw through Rita Hayworth at the Hollywood Canteen, the G. I.'s whistled their admiration; some children, their noses pressed against the pane, thought the beautiful Rita was irrevocably severed, so masterly was the magic. Thus it is with Lippmann's latest analysis. As several reviewers have already fully explained, he breaks up the world into an Atlantic Community (which his previous book explored); a Russian Orbit (which is a chief emphasis of this book); a Chinese Area and others which are emerging in other sections of the world. "It is the old Willkie in you," shouts the magician, "which makes you think the world is one. But lo, I have shown it to you in pieces." And we applaud the illusion so skilfully wrought.

The skill resides in exhibiting the natural affinities, political and geographic, which include England, Western Europe and the American Continent in a single Atlantic Community; which produce a separate Russian Orbit grounded in what I suppose may come to be known as the Molotov Doctrine in Eastern Europe; and which make Chinese independence and influence essential in the Far East (which I suggest might better be called the Near West from our viewpoint). The inevitability of these power developments could scarcely be better presented. The net effect of the analysis is illusory, however, for two reasons. Lippmann assumes that because these centers of gravitation exist, an *international* organization to maintain world peace is unrealistic and unworkable. He also assumes that, having blocked out these communities each dominated by a great power, he has sufficiently demonstrated that each of the powers will guarantee peace in its own area and that the areas will not come into conflict. Neither of these assumptions withstands critical examination.

In trying to show that world-wide organization is inept, he flails a straw man dubbed a "Wilsonian." This strange phantom of Lippmann's imagination does not know that the world has neighborhoods. He has not heard of Russia's nonexclusive alliance with Czecho-

slovakia. He would just as soon as not send American boys to quell every minor disturbance in the Near East. He thinks the Monroe Doctrine is a myth. He is an "internationalist," pure and especially simple. What is the fact, however? The fact is that no responsible present-day follower of Wilson has failed to take account of regional groupings, alliances, or potential federations. Such regional organization is acknowledged and welcomed in the Eleven Fundamentals of the Commission to Study the Organization of Peace, under Shotwell's chairmanship; in the "International Law of the Future," under Hudson's; and elaborately in Sumner Welles' recent proposals.

Wilson himself may have been opposed to regional alliances, but I know of no leading contemporary Wilsonian who is. Wilsonians take just as much account of the world's tough realities, its power constellations and geographic accidents, as does any vaunted super-realist who denies the integration of world interests in maintaining peace. Indeed, does not Mr. Lippmann lack realism in failing to note the role of science and industry in reducing the world to a sixty-hour air suburb, highly interdependent, with no region immune from future robot weapon attack except through collaborative maintenance of world-wide order? In any given region of conflict, the powers in that area could and would act first to restore peace. But they would act always, as it is now contemplated, within the framework of a "general international organization," in the name of the whole community of nations, and with their support marshalled in the background.

Certainly Clemenceau was "right," as Lippmann says, in insisting that Germany be drastically dealt with and that France's security be assured through police arrangements going beyond the League's assurances. And Wilson was "wrong" in easing up on Germany and advocating Allied disarmament, but he was not wrong in believing that joint maintenance of security is desirable. No present-day Wilsonian, reaffirming Wilson's central insight, repeats Wilson's error. Nor does any present-day Wilsonian think that peace can be maintained by a debating society of seventy nations each with an equal vote. No serious proposal, neither the